



City of Seattle

Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor

Department of Planning and Development

Diane M. Sugimura, Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: Councilmember Peter Steinbrueck, Chair, UD&P Committee
Councilmember Richard Conlin
Councilmember Tom Rasmussen

FROM: Diane M. Sugimura

DATE: April 6, 2005

SUBJECT: Committee Briefing: DPD Monthly Update for April 13, 2005 Meeting

Monthly Update: New Residential Units Authorized by Building Permit

Attached is our most recent update of housing development stats, based on issued building permits. This includes January 2004 through March 2005, for new construction based on construction permits, demolition based on demolition permits, and net unit change.

Built Green™ Residential Design Competition

We were pleased to sponsor this competition to encourage Seattle builders to embrace the Built Green™ program, a self-certification program developed by the Master Builders Association of King and Snohomish Counties. The seven winners included a range of developments from affordable housing to custom homes, small projects to very large-scale projects. The award winners may be viewed on our website at <http://www.seattle.gov/dclu/news/20050331b.asp>. Innovative features include passive solar design, photovoltaic systems generating renewable energy, pervious pavements, rainwater harvesting systems, extensive use of salvaged materials, green roofs, and accessory dwelling units.

A year and a half ago when we announced the competition, there were only 12 Built Green™ certified homes in Seattle. We now have 79 single family and multifamily projects with a total of 189 units. But perhaps even more significant are the more than 800 new Built Green™ projects with a total of 1,600 housing units currently under development in Seattle. This really shows how the market is growing.

Urban Sustainability Forum

We've been very pleased with the public response to our Urban Sustainability Forum. Our second presentation was held March 18, featuring Svend Auken, Denmark's former Minister of Energy and Environment. An amazing 900+ enthusiastic people showed up at Meany Hall on a Friday evening, to listen, absorb and cheer Mr. Auken. He also met with regional energy leaders on March 21, in a session facilitated by Congressman Inslee and Tony Usibelli of the State Department of Trade and Economic Development. Congressman Inslee was so moved by that session, that two weeks later he pulled the group together again to strategize about next steps.

On April 4, Dr. Robert Costanza, Director of the Gund Institute for Ecological Economics at the University of Vermont, spoke to a crowd of about 250 people. Ecological economics is a model that better supports urban sustainability and urban planning projects by demonstrating the broader range of benefits for the investment. The model will also help the City with communicating more clearly the environmental, social and community benefits to our constituency. After the presentation, people told us they were "intellectually stimulated" by his presentation. While in Seattle, Dr. Costanza also met with Seattle Public Utilities staff, and with the Bainbridge Graduate Institute.

March and April events may be viewed on Seattle Channel's website; videotapes or DVDs may be ordered at <http://www.seattlechannel.org/media/tapes.htm>

DPD Clean and Green Program Participation

The Clean and Green program is intended to help citizens, City departments, neighborhood businesses and other organizations work together to solve problems and make Seattle more inviting and livable. DPD participates in the program through the Code Compliance Program. Typically our involvement occurs before and after the actual event date: we visit problem sites with the Neighborhood Service Center Manager prior to the event to identify actual code violations that DPD can address, then we follow through by working with the property owner to cure the violations and take formal enforcement action, if necessary. A different neighborhood is scheduled for each month; the Department of Neighborhoods coordinates responses of City departments.

In March there was a Clean and Green project on Beacon Hill. The DPD Housing and Zoning Supervisor for the south part of Seattle visited six sites pointed out by the local NSC Manager, looking at a range of issues such as outdoor junk storage, inoperable vehicles on private property, illegal land use, and overgrowth of vegetation over sidewalks and into streets. No substantial violations of DPD codes were found at these particular sites, but the visit helped clarify for the NSC manager what issues DPD can help with.

On April 9, there will be a Clean and Green project along a stretch of 12th Avenue in the Central District. We have been in contact with the NSC Manager about potential violation issues in the area. DPD has solicited bids for the abatement demolition of a vacant single-family house that has been considered a hazard and eyesore in the neighborhood for several years.

DPD Demolitions of Unfit Buildings

In addition to the above demolition, DPD is pursuing abatement demolitions of a fire-damaged house in Magnolia, and a fire-damaged commercial building on Roosevelt Way Northeast. Both buildings have been the subject of neighborhood concern since 2002 as safety hazards, attractive nuisances and eyesores.

There are two circumstances that lead to DPD abatement orders to demolish structures. DPD may initiate abatement as an enforcement action in response to complaints, when the building meets the criteria for “unfit for human habitation or other use.” We may order the building to be repaired, or vacated and closed, or demolished, depending on the amount of damage and deterioration. Owners of severely damaged or deteriorated residential properties also may request an abatement inspection and analysis due to a provision in the Land Use Code that forbids demolition of housing unless a replacement use is established or unless the building has been found to be unfit and its demolition ordered by DPD.

The three above mentioned abatement demolitions were initiated by violation complaints. If a property owner fails to either repair or demolish a structure when ordered, DPD seeks a court order of abatement, and then contracts to have the work done; the City recovers the cost of the demolition through a tax lien collected by King County.

Policy and Code Development Efforts

Neighborhood Business District Strategy: The revisions to the Commercial Code, report and SEPA determination are being published April 7; the appeal period ends April 28, 2005.

Downtown Zoning Proposal: We are making final adjustments to the proposed code amendments, responding to concerns raised by members of the public, the development community, environmental community and others. We anticipate the final ordinance language will be completed by the end of April.

Environmentally Critical Areas Ordinance: We are working to respond to concerns raised by the environmental community and others. Some key issues include:

- The need for shoreline buffers;
- The proposed approach to regulating degraded wetlands;
- Revegetation requirements;
- Protection of eel grass; and
- Creek buffer sizes.

Director’s Rule on Height Measurement Technique

Last month Director’s Rule 12-2005 became effective: “Clarifying measurement techniques regarding structure height on lots with unusual topographic conditions in all zones, except downtown zones and the shoreline district.” This Rule addresses a height measurement issue that has confounded property owners, developers, designers and staff for a number of years. Sites with anomalous topographic conditions have effectively been penalized in the past. The Rule allows reasonable development on lots with unusual

topographic conditions (such as a dip in the middle of the site), but will not allow additional stories and will not grant additional development rights.

Attachment

DATE_PRMT_ISSUED	NEW BY CONST PERMIT	DEMO BY DEMO PERMIT	NET UNIT CHANGE
Jan-04	520	54	466
Feb-04	171	46	125
Mar-04	295	39	256
Apr-04	261	145	116
May-04	251	53	198
Jun-04	233	69	164
Jul-04	593	75	518
Aug-04	935	34	901
Sep-04	431	83	348
Oct-04	539	77	462
Nov-04	351	44	307
Dec-04	350	105	245
Jan-05	423	55	368
Feb-05	207	57	150
Mar-05	434	73	361

